



HANDBOOK ON EUROPEAN LAW RELATING TO ASYLUM, BORDERS AND IMMIGRATION

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Morten Kjærum

Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It is a pleasure to be back here to present the *Handbook on European law relating to asylum, borders and immigration*. I very much look forward to our discussions in the course of the day on the achievements already made in this area of law, as well as the many challenges that remain.

I would like to thank the European Court of Human Rights, and you in particular President Spielman for the continuous support provided to our excellent collaboration in developing this Handbook. I am well aware of the efforts of the registry staff helping us in reaching a high level product.

While the majority of the Agency's publications are comparative reports and surveys, publications like this handbook are vital to help those in the very frontline protecting human right to carry out their work in an effective and efficient manner.

This handbook is tangible evidence of the productive cooperation the CoE institutions and FRA have developed over the years.

The Council of Europe is an indispensable partner in increasing knowledge about the human rights situation in Europe and upholding these rights. The work of the European Court of Human Rights in ensuring the respect of asylum seekers and migrants human rights is well documented in our Handbook.

While the handbook is the first comprehensive guide to European law in this particular field, it is the second such handbook The European Court of Human Rights and FRA have produced together: in 2011 we published the *Handbook on European Non-Discrimination Law*, which has been praised for its comprehensiveness and usability. As actions speak louder than words – or in this case, figures speak louder than compliments – some 6,000¹ hard copies of the handbook on non-discrimination law have been disseminated since its publication, while in 2011-2012 alone, the handbook and its updates were downloaded 17,000 times!

¹ NB The dissemination figure for hard copies is for 22 languages; the internet downloads include translations into several non-EU languages PLUS updated versions in English and French.

I am pleased to be able to tell you now that we are already working together with the CoE on similar guides relating to data protection law and child protection legislation.

But to return to the handbook we are presenting today:

This guide is a practical tool that is designed to assist legal practitioners at the national and European level, including lawyers, judges, prosecutors, border guards, immigration officials and others working with national authorities, as well as non-governmental organisations. It is aimed at the very many persons across Europe who are taking decisions on issues concerning asylum and immigration law in the course of their everyday work.

The handbook complements other aspects of the Agency's work in the field of asylum, borders and migration.

- One example of this is FRA's research into the situation of irregular migrants in the EU. This has led to a number of publications, including a separate report on the vulnerability of migrants without legal status working in the domestic sector as cleaners or carers. We are using our experience from that project for current research we are carrying out into severe forms of labour exploitation.
- Another example is the report we published earlier this year concerning the fundamental rights of migrants arriving at the EU's southern sea borders, which described the perilous journeys made by migrants to enter the EU, discussed maritime surveillance mechanisms and cooperation with third countries, and detailed the treatment of migrants upon arrival.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The handbook we are presenting today covers an area of EU law which is not only complex, but is also rapidly changing. Just last week – on 6 June - the Court of Justice of the European Union issued in the case C-648/11 an important judgement concerning the application of the Dublin Regulation to unaccompanied minors in light of the child's best interests as laid down in Article 24 (2) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Because of these developments and the fact that EU asylum instruments will soon be changing, FRA is already working on an updated version of the handbook, which we plan to publish later this year. Today, we are making the guide available in four languages (English, French, German and Italian), with versions in Spanish, Greek, Bulgarian, Romanian, Croatian, Hungarian, and Polish to follow, as easy accessibility for practitioners at national level is crucial for any such publication to be useful.

In conclusion:

This handbook is a practical tool that aims to help those who are taking important decisions that influence the lives of vulnerable individuals every day. It will assist practitioners to apply European law correctly from the very beginning, hopefully contributing to fewer lengthy review proceedings. All in all, we believe that this publication will improve the implementation of fundamental rights throughout Europe, to the benefit of both workers in the field and the migrants and asylum seekers who are so affected by the laws covered in the guide you have before you.

Thank you for your attention.